

Somerles Junior School

Wigmore Lane, , Luton, LU2 8AH

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make good progress because not all teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Some teachers do not spot pupils' difficulties and help them to resolve them quickly enough.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always make it clear how the work can be improved, particularly in mathematics. Pupils are not always given time to respond to teachers' marking.
- Pupils' mental-mathematics skills are insecure. They also have too few opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills in other subjects.
- Often, pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work are weak.
- Pupils' behaviour is not managed consistently well. As a result, there is some minor disruption in lessons and when moving around the school. Behaviour is not always good on the playground.
- The school's plans for improvement are not precise enough. They do not allow governors and the headteacher to check that rapid progress is being made towards the improvement goals that have been set for pupils' progress and attainment.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have successfully tackled many of the weaknesses in teaching. There is no inadequate teaching and much is now good.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. As a result, pupils supported by this funding often do better than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils and their families receive good levels of care and support. Pupils' health and well-being are particularly well supported.
- Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well managed, so these pupils are able to engage fully in lessons.
- Pupils enjoy school. They arrive punctually for the start of the school day and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel safe and are confident that adults support them to resolve any difficulties they may have.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 18 lessons, observing nine teachers. Four lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- They heard pupils from Year 6 read. A sample of pupils' work from across the school was scrutinised. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and in the playground.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, the headteacher and other staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors read a wide range of school documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation; the school development plan; the school's data on pupils' progress and attainment; information about pupils' attendance and safeguarding; minutes of the governing body; and information about the management of staff performance.
- The views of parents, 28 of whom responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and one who responded by letter to the inspection team, were considered, as was previous parent survey information provided by the school.
- The views of 19 staff who returned a questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

David Rosenthal, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alison Cogher

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Someries Junior School is of average size for this type of school.
- Around three quarters of pupils are of White British heritage. A number of other ethnic groups are represented in the school, the largest of which are of Caribbean or Asian heritage. No pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion supported by school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or with a parent in the armed services) is around average.
- A few pupils with behavioural difficulties attend a special unit at another school on a part-time basis.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement and progress.
- The school uses the Investors in Pupils project.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2013, improve teaching so that it is of consistently good or better quality and so enables all pupils to make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Do this by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make good use of questioning to check pupils' learning in lessons so that any difficulties or misunderstandings pupils have are spotted and corrected quickly
 - activities in lessons challenge all pupils to improve their knowledge and skills
 - the marking of pupils' work, particularly in mathematics, provides clear guidance for pupils about how to improve their work, and that they are given time to carry out corrections where needed
 - pupils are taught clear strategies for tackling mental calculations
 - pupils are given more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects
 - pupils' are taught to form all letters properly and to join their handwriting
 - pupils' behaviour is managed consistently well in lessons.
- Increase the impact of school leaders and governors on school improvement by:
 - ensuring that goals to improve both teaching and pupils' achievement, and the actions needed to bring these about, are stated very precisely
 - identifying times to check that effective actions have been taken and that the school is, therefore, on track to secure the improvement goals set
 - ensuring that pupils' behaviour outside lessons is managed consistently well by all staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment on entry varies from year to year. Typically, it is average and often higher. The school does not build on these starting points well enough and too few pupils from all ethnic groups make good progress by the time they leave Year 6.
- In 2011, Year 6 pupils' attainment fell to a low level. In 2012, the results recovered and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to that found nationally. Improvement continues. However, too few pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Pupils are slow to recall number facts and multiplication tables; they often do not use the most efficient mental strategy to do calculations, sometimes having to count using their fingers or having to write out calculations. This slows down the speed at which they work.
- Pupils' handwriting is immature. Letters are often incorrectly formed and seldom joined. This slows the speed at which they carry out their work, and the readability of what they produce.
- Pupils have good opportunities to read and write in other subjects, providing valuable practice. However, they seldom get the same opportunity to use and apply mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make at least as much progress as other pupils. The gap between their attainment and that of other pupils at the school is closing quickly. Currently, these pupils do as well as others in mathematics, although typically they are almost a term behind in English by the time they leave the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including the few pupils who attend a special unit off-site, often make better progress than similar pupils nationally. This is because support is well organised and well targeted to their needs. A variety of proven programmes is used to good effect to improve reading, writing and mathematics, as well as social skills and behaviour.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching sometimes fails to capture pupils' interest so their learning does not move on quickly enough. In these situations, teachers do not ask questions to explore the understanding of the class and of individuals.
- Some teachers talk for too long and listen too little to their pupils. As a result, pupils' attention wanders and their learning slows. In these situations, teachers also do not supervise pupils closely enough and so do not spot those who are not getting on with their tasks, or who do not understand. This means that some pupils waste time and fail to make sufficient progress.
- In general, teachers do not teach pupils to form letters well and do not expect high enough standards of presentation. Efficient methods for carrying out mental arithmetic are not taught sufficiently systematically.
- Although teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously pupils are seldom given time to respond to

comments, particularly in mathematics, to correct mistakes or complete more challenging examples. In some cases, pupils are given clear guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve. The steps pupils need to take in their learning are often recorded in pupils' books so they can see how they are moving forward. However, few pupils are clear about what they need to focus on specifically in order to improve.

- Teaching has improved and much seen during the inspection is good and is helping pupils to make better progress than in previous years. In these situations, teachers are clear about what pupils are to achieve. Instructions and explanations are precise and easy for pupils to understand. Through thorough questioning they identify pupils' problems and deal with them quickly.
- The good teaching sometimes splits learning into short sections with brief periods of direct teaching, each followed by practice, discussion and checking.
 - For example, in one lesson, higher-ability pupils collected measurements of their heights. A carefully thought-out sequence of teaching and practical activities helped them to identify and understand key mathematical ideas, such as mean, median and mode, working with the data pupils had already collected. Pupils' progress was good because of precise explanations, careful questioning and the use of real-life information.
- Pupils needing additional help are well supported, often by experienced and skilled teaching assistants, who offer calm and patient explanations which enable pupils to tackle and understand similar work to that of others.
- The support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well matched to pupils' specific needs. The support is modified where necessary in light of the regular reviewing of their progress.
- Homework is set regularly. It links closely to pupils' work in school and supports their overall learning well. Pupils are often asked to do work which develops their independence, for instance by carrying out research, or designing and making something related to their class-work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils, parents and staff express some concern about behaviour in the school. This involves some name-calling and unkindness between pupils at lunchtime and as they move around the building. Although this behaviour is not widespread and does not undermine the generally happy atmosphere of the school, it is not always managed well enough.
- In a small number of lessons, expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough and so minor disruption, such as continuing to talk when they should be listening, does occur. However, most pupils are polite and well mannered, and show good levels of interest and enthusiasm in their lessons.
- In general, pupils show respect for, and interest in, the beliefs of others. For instance, in a Year 6 religious education lesson, pupils were asked to compare the beliefs of humanists and members of different religious faiths, as they considered the way pupils should live their lives. They listened and responded well to each other as they discussed and explored the issues, sometimes drawing on their own faiths to exemplify their ideas.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the various types of bullying and how they can minimise risk to themselves. They are confident that staff take bullying seriously and deal with it when it

does occur. One girl said, 'The school feels like a family. If you're upset, you can always go to someone.'

- Initiatives, such as Investors in Pupils, are used well to develop pupils' understanding of the benefits of good behaviour and the roles they can play to support the community. Pupils proudly take on various responsibilities and carry out their duties in a mature way. These opportunities help them to gain personal skills and confidence and so contribute well to the school's day-to-day working.
- Pupils with particular behavioural needs are well supported and often make good progress in their personal development. Some pupils have benefited from the help they have received from attending a specialist support unit. They are making a successful transition back into school, supported effectively by a specialist teacher.
- Pupils say they enjoy being at school and value the experiences they have in lessons, when on visits and during after-school and residential activities. Their attendance is above average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although many weaknesses in teaching have been tackled successfully, some remain. Pupils' progress is accelerating but it, and pupils' attainment, are not yet high enough. The management of pupils' behaviour has improved but it is not consistently good in all classes and around the school.
- Support organised by the local authority has helped the school to refine the processes it uses to plan for improvement. The school has correctly identified most of its current weaknesses. However, the improvement plan is not precise enough to ensure necessary improvements are made quickly. Some of the planned actions are too vague. It is not clear what is to be achieved by particular dates. This means that it is not possible to measure accurately the pace or effectiveness of the improvement work, for example on teaching and achievement.
- The headteacher, supported by senior staff and governors, have been determined to make improvements over the last few years. Strong action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching, with the result that much is now good. Teachers are observed regularly and accurate judgements are made about their skills. Good advice and appropriate training are provided to help them improve where necessary.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding receive good support, as do disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This is because the school takes care to understand their individual needs and to match support closely to them.
- The curriculum meets most pupils' learning needs and offers much interest and enjoyment for pupils, promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Visits to residential centres and historical sites enrich pupils' social and cultural experiences, contributing much to their learning and personal development. There are many musical and sporting opportunities, which enable pupils to explore and identify their cultural interests and talents.. Many pupils take on responsibilities within the school, which also support their social development and the sense of community.
- Families are well supported. Those in difficulty are encouraged and enabled to get their children to school regularly and on time. The family worker and wider school staff forge good relationships with parents and carers. Parents of disabled pupils and those who have special

educational needs are successfully encouraged to get involved in their children's work and are helped to support them.

- The school's close links with the off-site provision used by a few pupils, and with its staff, means that the safety of the pupils concerned is ensured.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

- **The governance of the school:**

- Governors make a good contribution to the school. They visit regularly and each governor takes a particular interest in one of the classes and/or subjects. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They understand the data on pupils' achievement and challenge the headteacher and staff to make improvements. Governors check on the way pupil premium money is spent, so ensuring that it has the right effect on raising achievement. Safeguarding is taken seriously and a governor makes sure that the correct employment checks have been made on staff. The management of staff performance is carried out correctly, so staff are enabled to access training, so to develop their skills further. Governors make sure that salary decisions are linked to managing teachers' performance and consider and approve any pay rises recommended.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109575
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	401063

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Hooton
Headteacher	Karen Jones
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2010
Telephone number	01582 738810
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